

This short act of worship has been prepared for you by Deacon Jacqueline Esama-John to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

**Lighting the Candle** – We light a candle to remind us of the presence of Christ with us. Jesus Christ light of the world. In you there is no darkness. We have a responsibility to speak and shine light in darkness.

### **Prayer of Approach**

Jesus, remembered on the mountainside,  
Teaching the people near you as you looked beyond to a world  
of need,  
help us to hear your call today.  
Turn us outwards, beyond ourselves,  
Help us to see as clearly as you do the needs that we could  
meet.  
Stir in us a hunger and thirst for justice to be done,  
and a readiness to live simply that others may simply live.  
Grant us courage to face the bitterness, resentment and  
misunderstanding that can come with following you.

Inspire us to be heralds of your kingdom and the instruments  
of your love for the sake of the God who accepts us and grants  
us life in its fullness.

### **The Collect for today**

Loving God, through your son you have called us to repent of  
our sin,  
to believe the good news and to celebrate the coming of your  
kingdom.  
Grant that we may hear the call to discipleship and gladly  
proclaim the gospel to a waiting world through Jesus Christ our  
Lord. **Amen.**

(The Methodist Worship Book P.530)

### **Hymn: Hear the call of the kingdom (Singing the Faith 407)**

Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/XujsuPRLpOU>

Hear the call of the kingdom,  
lift your eyes to the King;  
let His song rise within you  
as a fragrant offering  
of how God rich in mercy,  
came in Christ to redeem  
all who trust in His unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the Kingdom  
to be children of light  
with the mercy of heaven,  
the humility of Christ;  
walking justly before him,  
loving all that is right,  
that the life of Christ may shine through us.

*King of Heaven, we will answer the call.  
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,  
filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim  
salvation in Jesus' name.*

Hear the call of the Kingdom  
to reach out to the lost  
with the Father's compassion  
in the wonder of the cross,  
bringing peace and forgiveness  
and a hope yet to come;  
let the nations put their trust in Him.

*King of Heaven, we will answer the call.  
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,  
filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim  
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Keith Getty (b.1974) Kristyn Getty (b.1980) & Stuart Townend (b.1963)

### Prayer of Adoration

Holy God,  
To you alone belong glory, honour, and praise.  
We join with the hosts of heaven as we worship.  
You alone are worthy of adoration from every mouth.  
And every tongue shall sing your praise.  
You create the earth by your power.  
You save the human race in your mercy.  
And renew it through your grace.  
To you loving God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
Be all glory, honour, and praise.  
Now and for ever. Amen

(The Methodist Worship Book P. 28)

### Prayer of Confession

Loving God,

**We have sinned against you in what we have thought, said, and done.**

**We have not loved you with our whole heart.**

**We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.**

**We are truly sorry and turn away from what is wrong.**

**Forgive us for the sake of your son,**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Silence

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

This is his gracious word.

Your sins are forgiven.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

(The Methodist Worship Book P. 29)

### **A reading from the Old Testament- Jonah 3:1-5, 10**

#### **New Revised Standard Version - Conversion of Nineveh**

**3** The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup>So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. <sup>4</sup>Jonah

began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” <sup>5</sup>And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

### **A reading from the New Testament: Mark 1:14-20**

#### **New Revised Standard Version - The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry**

<sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

#### Jesus Calls the First Disciples

<sup>16</sup> As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” <sup>18</sup> And immediately they left their

nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup> As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup> Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

## Reflection

As I have been reflecting on this service today, I have also had to wrestle with the idea of where I have seen signs of God's kingdom amid this terrible pandemic and the changes that we are seeing every day. I have had to ask myself – what is my role today as a follower of Jesus? My life and ministry have been fed by welcoming the stranger and building community. I have been particularly missing sitting down with people at breakfast and lunch clubs, creative time exploring biblical themes with families at Messy Church, sitting down with youths listening to their vibes or visiting folks in care homes and enjoying the life-giving nature of memory worship etc.

A few Sundays ago, we saw our Superintendent minister, Revd Daniel Haylett leading us in renewing our covenant. We reflected in the covenant service that Christ has many forms of

services to be done – some are easy, some are difficult, in some it says we can please Christ, in others it says we have to deny ourselves.

All of this has propelled me to think about my ordination and the call of God on my life. Here again, in outlining all the things we have been called to do, the President of the Methodist Conference at the ordination service reminded us that this ministry will make great demands upon us and upon those close to us, yet in all this, the Holy Spirit will sustain us by his grace.

In the call to follow that we hear in our Hebrew Bible and gospel readings today from Jonah and Mark, there is evidence that there is a cost to discipleship, that lives are changed, and plans altered, yet we see the Holy Spirit at work sustaining and transforming lives. I marvel at how quickly Simon, Andrew, James, and John leave their nets and cast aside all that they have, to follow Jesus. I am equally struck by the sharp contrast with Jonah's lack of faith or courage and his epic adventure which includes being thrown overboard from a ship, swallowed by a whale, and finally thrown up at the very point where he started running away from his mission.

From the beginning of scripture, the central mark of faithfulness has been responsiveness. The story of Noah and

Abraham, for example, point us to this Biblical truth. When God calls us and when we answer that call, everything changes. We can either embrace the change or stubbornly resist it. The good news of Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. Jesus keeps calling us in the here and now just as he did with those fishermen as they labour by the sea of Galilee.

And it also dawned on me that something about fishermen appealed to Jesus. Is it about the art of fishing? Is there something about the skillset of fishermen that we could emulate?

Growing up in Africa, I could not see anything particularly dazzling about the work of fishermen. I had the opportunity of witnessing first-hand the struggles of very poor fishermen who go out to sea all night and come back home in the morning with no catch at all – something that could go on for days, causing huge stress and anxiety. This is because everybody relies on those fish, either to sell them or to buy them. If you get a chance to come close to them, you will see that the nets are very heavy so pulling and casting the nets is quite an exhausting exercise. Fishing is such a meticulous trade: watching, looking out, having knowledge about the tides etc. Maybe we could also learn something important about fishing as it emerged as one of the sticking points in the post-Brexit trade deal?

Jesus values those who are lost and broken and wants us to be a part of his rescue team and show love and care. We need to have the nets, the fishing poles, the bates and align our resources and our passion with what is happening around us to make great change and impact. Perhaps God is calling you to some 'modern day Nineveh'. Maybe Jesus wants you to drop what you are doing and follow him down a new road in a different direction and truly, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7: 31, 'the present form of this world is passing away'.

Today we are living in a pandemic. Covid-19 is here, and we are challenged by this invitation and promise by Jesus: 'Follow me, I will make you fish for people'. What does it mean to follow Jesus and fish for people in these challenging times? Our beautiful church buildings are shut, we are asked to social distance from people, we must wear a face covering, we must stay at home, children are being schooled at home, our hospitals and healthcare systems are under a lot of pressure because of the increase in the number of COVID-19 cases. Many businesses are not able to operate. Unemployment is on the rise and people are living with a lot of anxiety.

In these circumstances, it is very easy for our focus to be upon ourselves – I am reminded that hope in the future does not lie in self-interest, but in self-sacrifice; the very attribute that Jesus and the disciples displayed. God does not save us for our

own sake alone but for the sake of others. This has enabled me to answer my own question about my role as a follower of Jesus – particularly in this time. We start with taking an interest in people’s lives, showing that we care about them. A simple phone call, a text message, practical help with things like collecting prescription medicines for those who are housebound, delivering food parcels, or sending out materials for worship and other information.

The call to fish for people in Mark’s gospel also echoes a reading in Jeremiah 16: 15-17, where God calls for ‘many fishermen to catch God’s people who have strayed and have started to worship idols...’. And so, there is an urgency in trying to account for, and stay connected with, members of our congregations while our church buildings remain shut. We organise our worship services and other activities on Zoom, on Facebook, on YouTube, on WhatsApp and other social media channels. At the same time, we are seeking to reach out to those outside via food hubs and other activities.

We are called to different forms of ministries, whether it is a healing ministry, a ministry of word and sacrament, a ministry of witness and service etc. There are so many ways that we can follow Jesus. Perhaps we follow by listening to those around and responding with encouragement and care, perhaps we follow by becoming a volunteer in the new vaccine hubs or

food hubs, perhaps we follow by being generous with our wealth and with our time.

And what seems to be at the heart of the matter is that we can follow Jesus in all these different situations and circumstances precisely by trying to imitate Christ, to love our neighbours as ourselves, to reach out to those whom society has rejected, to care for the sick and suffering and so on and so forth.

God is at work in this world and what we want to be doing is aligning ourselves with what God is doing. We are called to be God’s presence in the world, to look out for those in need and I believe that through the experience of the pandemic, God is showing us in a forceful way that we need to get back to basics, to pitch our tents as Jeremiah also exhorts us to do, to cast our nets on the other side, and to use the fishing hook and fish for people. Amen.

### **Prayers of Intercessions**

(I invite you to observe some moment of silence in between the prayers)

Loving God, you sent your Son to bring good news to the poor,  
sight to the blind, freedom to captives and  
salvation to your people

Anoint us with your Spirit, rouse us to work in his name...

Father by your Spirit

**Bring in your Kingdom.**

Send us to bring help to the poor,  
And freedom to the oppressed...

Father by your Spirit

**Bring in your Kingdom.**

Send us to proclaim that the time is here for you to save your  
people...

Father by your Spirit

**Bring in your Kingdom.**

Send us to bring healing to the sick...

Father by your Spirit

**Bring in your Kingdom.**

Send us to those who mourn to bring joy and comfort...

Father by your Spirit

**Bring in your Kingdom.**

(New Patterns for Worship (adapted)- Church Publishing House)

**The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come.  
thy will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses.  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation.  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

**Hymn: Will you come and follow me (Singing the Faith 673)**

Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/o469PRLdbHU>

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world  
around,  
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

John L Bell (b. 1949) And Graham Maule (b.1958)

### **Closing responses & Blessing**

From where we are to where you need us.

#### **Christ be beside us.**

From what we are to what you can make us

#### **Christ be before us.**

From the mouthing of generalities, to making signs of your kingdom.

#### **Christ be beneath us.**

Through the streets of this world to the gates of heaven

#### **Christ be above us.**

Surround us with your presence, inspire us with your purpose,  
confirm us in your love. And the blessing of God, Father Son  
and Holy Spirit be amongst you and remain with you always.

#### **Amen**

(The Lion Prayer Collection (adapted) (1992) Lion Hudson plc)